SOME DEEPER ASPECTS OF THE WAR,

Being the Substance of a Public Lecture given at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Saturday, 28th November, 1914,

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Mrs. Despard in the Chair.

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SOME DEEPER ASPECTS OF THE WAR.

I WISH to speak to-night on the deeper realities of the Great War and from a standpoint that requires an effort of imagination on your part. It is just because all our thoughts and feelings are focussed upon externals, upon the terrible happenings now transpiring within the range of human vision, that it is so essential we should look at the underlying aspects of the War, rather than concentrate our entire attention upon outward events. Everywhere, amongst all classes, is heard the constant query whether there is not some great design working itself out behind the present chaos. Is there a sinister purpose, or some great beneficent plan gradually unfolding itself? This idea is becoming more and more expressed. One finds the same thought in all countries and races. What lies behind this great upheaval? What does it stand for? What will be its ultimate outcome?

In spite of the sorrows, troubles and perplexities of the present time, there seems inherent in the fibre of human consciousness the intuitive belief that behind all this welter some great purpose is being evolved, that out of the world war will come a better and happier era for mankind. If we look back into history, whether secular or biblical, we find from the earliest days the instinctive belief is found that some time, somehow, a point in human history would be reached when warfare should cease, and a lasting peace become established. The idea has gradually developed that this period would be prefaced by a world upheaval, greater than humanity had ever known.

Since the present War commenced many forecasts have been made. Some of these prophecies are undoubtedly of modern origin, of no particular value, but others do undoubtedly date back many years, and in some ways carry out the idea that human thought has pierced forward from quite early days to a period of Armageddon such as now is here.

I should like to speak of some prophecies with which I have been familiar for many years—prophecies current in the Near and Middle East, "dark sayings" they are called, which have passed down from father to son, from generation to generation, but are rarely written or published.

One of these is to the effect that when a Constantine should again be King or Emperor in Europe, and marry a Sophia, a new age would dawn and Christianity return to Constantinople. And now we know that the present King of Greece is named Constantine, and his wife is Queen Sophia.

Then there is the curious old tradition in Constantinople referring to the seventh gate in the Emperor Constantine's seawall at Stamboul. Upon this gate is written in Latin, "Jesus Christ conquers." This is said to be the only Christian symbol left by the Moslems in Constantinople. The prophecy states that a day will dawn when Christianity will return to Constantinople, "and Christ shall ride in triumph through the seventh gate in Constantine's great wall."

Another curious forecast connected with Constantinople was that a day will come when the walls and dome of San Sophia, the Mosque, will crack, and then the doom of the Ottoman Empire in Europe will be at hand. During the last few years the walls of the mosque have been cracking to such an extent that it is a question whether the whole edifice can last much longer without crumbling to pieces.

There is a "dark saying" not much known in the West, but often heard in the Balkans, to the effect that a time would come when the White Pope and Black Pope (as the

head of the Jesuit Order is called) would die during the same night, and following this sign would dawn what is called the "Great White Day." It is a strange coincidence that both Pope Pius X. and the head of the Jesuit Order, should have died within two hours of each other quite recently. The last action of the Pope was to send his blessing to the head of the Jesuit Order. Through all these sayings runs the same thought, that a Great White Dawn, or an era of peace, would follow a time when signs and wonders would be manifest; and many prophecies state that this White Dawn would be heralded by a world-wide war.

The Persian prophet Baha'u'llah, who died in 1892, about whom we are now hearing so much in this country, in 1868 sent his famous letters to the crowned heads of Europe, calling upon them to lay down their arms, and bring about international peace through arbitration, in order to prevent Armageddon. He is said to have foretold the downfall of the Ottoman Empire, and the French Empire; the uprising of the Teuton hegemony, the ultimate downfall of the German Empire at a time when the Rhine would run red with blood; and finally, he foresaw the coming of the "most great Peace."

> "These ruinous wars, these fruitless strifes must cease.
> Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country;
> Let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind."

Bàha'u'llah's prophecies are being fulfilled before our eyes.

Then there is the Slavonic saying, known throughout Russia, that a time would arrive when the great White Eagle would stretch out its wings, and the sign of this event would be the opening of the gates of the North and of the South. "Then will dawn new light, new illumination, throughout the world!" The White Eagle naturally refers to Russia.

If we turn to the prophecies of Garnier, Russell, and the Edgars, whose books were published at the end of last

century and the beginning of this, we find curious prophecies based upon symbolic measurements taken within the Great Pyramid. In Messrs. Edgars' book on the Pyramids, the "loosing of the devil and end of the age of the Gentiles," is fixed for the autumn of 1914. A new spiritual era is to follow a period of world chaos.

There are also many monkish prophecies, besides that of "Johannes'," referring to a future period when a great devastating war would be followed by a new age of peace and joy.

The question now arises whether the present War is the one so long foreseen, or have we still to await its advent?

Half the world is already fighting—Russia, Germany, France, Austria, Turkey, Servia, and Great Britain. These countries represent just over half the earth area of the world, and nearly half the world's population, so far as can be estimated, belong to belligerent nations. Over fifteen million men are either armed or arming in Europe alone! The estimated cost of the present War is £1 per soldier per day, so that an expenditure of, say, £15,000,000 per day is being undertaken for the direct purposes of the War. As the War looks like spreading further, there is surely every reason for believing that this is the final great struggle, which, according to prophecy and belief, is to precede the coming of a new world-era.

If this be so, and I for one believe it is, there are three questions which suggest themselves. The first is: What are the underlying causes for Armageddon? The second: Are we to attribute it to the hand of God or to the hand of man? And the third question is: What does it portend for each race, nation, and individual?

These are three questions with which I can only hope to deal in a summary fashion. Some further opportunity may arise for dealing with them at greater length. Before taking them up I should like to refer to three orders of beings who

could probably give satisfactory replies to these questions. First, the Prophets or Messengers of God, who have appeared from time to time in the world's history. The last of these, Baha'u'llah, died in exile and prison at Acca in 1892, leaving behind him a book of laws *(Kitab i Akdas)*, written with the express purpose of helping forward the social, religious, and economic reconstruction which he foresaw would follow the present great conflict. In Baha'u'llah's writings, many of which have not yet been translated, will be found answers to the questions I have propounded.

Then there are the Seers, those who have trained themselves by purity and self-control to look beyond the normal range of human vision. They are to be found especially in the East, teaching their own students, but very rarely speaking openly. Their message is usually given to the small bodies of men and sometimes women whom they are training for special work. The seers might well take for their motto that wonderful saying in the *Upanishads*, "The infinite is the *immediate*."

Then we come to a third order of beings—the Visionaries; those who have developed to some extent the power of clairvoyant vision, and can watch the shadows cast by events before their arrival, and warn their fellow-men of the times to be. People look down upon the visionary, and seem to think that his message is not worth listening to, because he dreams dreams and sees visions, which he finds it difficult to interpret, or which he attempts to interpret and interprets wrongly. Yet let us remember that "where there is no vision, there the nation perisheth." The visionary might well take for his motto the words of Swedenborg—himself a visionary of the first order—"Thought from the eye closes up the understanding; but thought from the understanding *(i.e.*, the inner vision) opens the eye."

It is from the point of view of the visionary that I want

to answer if possible these three questions. It seems to me essential that those who feel they have a message for their fellow-men should give it now, especially the visionary, because he can help those who cannot see quite so far through this valley of darkness, to discern the light which is beyond the shadow of present world-events.

What are the underlying causes for Armageddon as seen by the visionary?

Let me speak as one who has for many years watched the oncoming radiance of a new spiritual wave descending towards the world of men and women from higher and invisible spheres. We visionaries have seen the forces of darkness in human nature rising to meet this great regenerating influence, or breath of God. The attempt to engulf the descent of the Holy Spirit has produced a great conflict, which has taken place just beyond the range of normal vision. This conflict in the air, between the forces of light and the forces of darkness has been going on for many years past, and we have felt sure that a time must come when the conflict would be reflected and manifested outwardly in the human world. The present state of world-affairs has come from the opposition of human thinking to the fresh outpouring of the Christ spirit. It is caused to some extent by the blank materialism of the age in which we live, and the mental conflict is one which has only just begun to affect us individually. The first external effect of the astral Armageddon is the present world War. It is very difficult to put into intelligible language how this struggle appears to the visionary—it is almost impossible. Picture to yourself, if you can, the descent of great waves of light, "the fires of God's breathing," and then the darkness, symbolic of mankind's sensualism and ignorance, rising up to prevent the manifestation of that light.

Many people attempt to place the responsibility for the War upon God—they say it is the "wrath of God" that has produced it. This is a theory to be strongly combated.

Where you find the expression, "wrath of God," used in the New Testament, a more correct translation of the original Greek words would be "spiritual urge" or "breath" of God. As in Romans i. 18: "For the spiritual urge or breath of God is revealed from heaven against the evil doers who through iniquity suppress the truth." (Also see Ephesians v. 6.) This urge of God is now upon us, and to the visionary it appears as a great white light; it is referred to in prophecy as the new dawn. We must try to realize, if we can, that God can never send war or tribulation. He sends to His children Life, Love, Truth, Joy, and Peace. It is our opposition to the coming of these waves or successive Divine outbreathings which creates obstacles and causes conflict and tribulation.

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Is God or man responsible for Armageddon?

Surely we can see, looking back into history, that man himself has brought about the present state of affairs—he alone is responsible for what is now taking place. All nations that look upon brute force as worthy of worship must share the blame for the situation which has led to the present crisis. Germany is accused by us of being responsible for the present War, and we know, judging by recent events, that to some extent this is a fact,—superficially it would appear that Germany has plunged the world into war. But if we look into the history of the last few centuries we shall find that nearly all the countries of Europe are responsible, among them Great Britain, and therefore they must all share the responsibility for the situation now developing.

I remember hearing in Egypt a story told by a Sheikh at the expense of Great Britain and her position as a world power, which is perhaps rather interesting just now. The Sheikh spoke in parable, and this is what he said:—"A traveller walking through the streets of a town came across a

house with its windows broken and its doors askew. Inside the house everything was in turmoil. He went into the house, and finding the owner, said to him, 'Your house requires putting in order, it is full of disorder. May I call my servants and put things straight for you?' The owner of the house accepted the offer, so the traveller then called in his attendants and set the house in order. Having done this, he built a hut in the garden outside the house, and turning to the owner, said, 'This is a very nice house; now it has been spring-cleaned it is in beautiful order, and I and my servants will inhabit it; you can go into the hut and live there, but I will take possession of your house and administer it in my own way and for my own ends.'"

This is the oriental idea of the way in which Great Britain has become possessed of her colonies and dependencies, often the result of aggressive warfare with peoples smaller than herself. We must remember that Germany is to a large extent only attempting to copy Great Britain—although in so doing she is not using our methods, but employing more brutal methods of her own. We cannot afford to throw stones, but as a nation should endeavour to cultivate a little humility.

Great Britain is at last fighting a war for high principle, and she and her Allies will in the end certainly prove victorious. We must ask ourselves at the present time, What does this great conflict portend for the individual, what can we learn from it?

If we really do stand at the most remarkable point in the world's history, how is it going to affect us?

While so many props—human and material—are falling away on all sides, let me express my conviction that surely the first lesson we urgently need to learn as individuals is not to continue to seek satisfaction in outward events and activities. Otherwise our lives will be barren of all true spiritual achievement. The visionary sees a great light waiting to

dawn *within the individual consciousness*, tapping, so to speak, at the threshold of the mind of each unit of the race—and he calls upon his fellows to rise up and open the doors of their inner being to let in the illumination that will bring peace and a sure reward. If we do not become centres of light and peace within ourselves we cannot expect that this World Armageddon will come to a satisfactory or speedy conclusion. Light must dawn within the individual before it can dawn within the nation. "Turn thy sight unto thyself," says Baha'-u'llah, "and thou wilt find ME standing within thee, powerful, mighty, and supreme!" We should learn to know that Life is indestructible, deathless, that it can only widen until it grows into the universal. As we read the casualty lists in the papers, and endeavour to console those who have lost friends and relatives, let us try to turn their thought and the thought of the world away from the belief in death to the understanding that in God's universe there is no death!

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Some months before the War, working in those avenues leading from this realm of consciousness to the next, I watched preparations being made on all sides for the transition of an unusually large number of souls. I asked why preparations on such an extensive scale were taking place, and was told that much larger numbers than usual were about to pass out into the wider life, necessitating special efforts on the part of those who stand at the portals of the next state of being. I was given to understand that light and help would be needed for many thousands now hurled from the material world through war. The visionary asserts it to be a fact that the veils between this state of consciousness and the next are being dissipated, and that the day is not so far off when they will for ever disappear. A new dawn is coming nearer and nearer to us, breaking down barriers and making it easier for humanity to pass from one stage of life into the next.

Remember that the conditions of so-called death are becoming more harmonious than ever in world history. We are liable to be discouraged, to feel there is so little we can do as individuals, but our thoughts and prayers can accomplish more than we know or realize. Therefore hold on to the thought that there is no death—that Life is indestructible, and that we are indeed surrounded by the omnipotence of Divine love.

The Lord Buddha says, "To make an end of selfishness is true happiness. The greatest joy is to subdue the selfish thought of I, *to realize the God within*." The Koran tells us that those who trust in Allah, the central life, which wonderful to relate, is always waiting to become reflected within us, will be helped by Allah, and nothing shall conquer them.

The Seer calls upon each one of us to pull up the blinds in order that the light may illumine the secret recesses of our being. Then, and then alone, shall we discover that the graäl cup containing the elixir of life and joy is already in our possession, and our thirst can be for ever quenched. It only remains for us to take advantage of the ever-present, all-powerful solvent, and apply it to the destruction of every manner of discord, sorrow and disease.

We must not allow ourselves to become discouraged, for the dawn is near to each if we will but lift our vision to it. Remember the old story about the Devil. One day he held a sale of his tools. They were marked with the names of all the evils of mankind—Lust, Hatred, Fear, Selfishness, and so forth. Apart from all the rest was a small wedge-shaped instrument, priced at double the value of the others. The name of this tool was Discouragement. When asked why he valued it so much higher than any other, the Devil replied, "Because no one knows it belongs to me, and with that tool I can enter the minds of my victims; once inside I can use any of the others that I like." Discouragement in the face

of the stern trials with which we are surrounded must be fought. We should cultivate imagination and the wider vision, so that we may feel and know there is coming toward humanity, beyond this present war, a "Great White Dawn." Realize, if you can, that the light is already within you, not outside, and you must seek for the kingdom *within*.

Great Britain is learning many lessons from the War, and there is great hope for the future when we see that so much has already been taken to heart. We have discovered that in the face of a national emergency Party Government is not enough; all the brains of the best men are required, and so we see members of the Opposition co-operating with the party in power for the carrying on of government. By-and-bye we sleepy men will wake up to the fact that from a social and economic standpoint it will be wiser to use the whole of our brain power rather than a part. This will be done by giving women the vote on the same terms as it is held by men. Then secret diplomacy, which breeds war, will be put down for ever. People are already talking of the next war. Let this War go on and on and on, till the Democracies of the world rise up and insist that there shall be no more warfare. Indeed, this War is waged in order that warfare shall for ever cease.

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There are two great evils in the world now rising to the surface—rising, I believe, in order that they may be destroyed. One is the evil of war, about which we have just been speaking; the other is sex vice, which at war-time shows itself most openly. Men have been working through many generations to legislate in a way that will bring about an end to this awful scourge. But they have failed. It must be left to the instinctive methods of woman's intuition to combat this evil—an evil greater than we realize owing to the conspiracy of silence with which it is purposely surrounded. The time has

come to speak openly. I see the awful conditions in the mental atmosphere around us resulting from this terrible evil, conditions that are keeping back the coming of the great light that is to regenerate the world. Women realize that starvation wages and sweating labour also play their part in the encouragement of this social evil.

Therefore the time must come when men will allow the wider, purer vision of women to deal with this question. It cannot be satisfactorily handled till women stand side by side with men as their political equals. Women are doing their duty bravely at the present hour, remaining at their posts, helping to fight for the right, and they deserve better treatment at the hands of those who hold political authority. Remember we can each do something by purifying our own thought to raise the standard of the racial thought concerning the sexual problem.

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Looking out upon the world from this standpoint one sees light particularly focussed on Poland and the Slavonic race. I am amongst those who believe that the breath of God will be reflected by Russia and through the Slavs. There is a fear in this country that there will be a war, following the present War, when Western Europe will fight against the Slavs. This is entirely unlikely. Our fear of the Russian people is based upon lack of knowledge regarding the Russian character, which is opposite in almost every particular to the character of the Teuton. The Russian people have passed through a time of crucifixion ; her men and women are now rising imbued with a new spirit ; fighting not only the enemies without their borders, but those within—the autocratic government, which they see has to a large extent been inspired by Germany. It is marvellous to see how Russia has dealt with the drink problem in so short a time. The revenue derived from the taxation of spirits in Russia is

estimated at over eighty millions sterling per annum! This revenue has disappeared in order that the people may become sober, and rise in development. An English Chancellor of the Exchequer some fifty years ago very much shocked the House of Commons by saying that Great Britain periodically drank herself out of debt. That is no longer true of Great Britain, but up to this moment it has been true of Russia—the drink evil has held Russia back from her natural evolution. Now at one blow she has sacrificed the revenue from that traffic. Better conditions for the masses and freedom for the subject races within her borders are ideals Russia has set herself to fulfil. We see what can be accomplished by a people inspired by a great light, shining from within their souls rather than from without. Let then our fear of Russia disappear.

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Turning to another aspect of this War, we must be prepared for great cataclysms and seismic disturbances to follow in its wake. Turn away in thought from all that can cause you fear or anxiety, and realize that the spirit within will carry you through, and give you that "peace which passeth understanding." Keep faith with yourself and with your fellow-men, knowing that a new faith and a new era is to come. Look out towards Poland, knowing that to some extent the Slav child-soul is destined to bring illumination to us all. Let us remember that before we are through with this War we have to fight against brute force, materialism, sensualism, within our own borders, as well as against the enemy outside. The final struggle will be within. The point I wish to emphasize most strongly is, that although this struggle may continue for years, although we may all be involved in terrible times of tribulation, yet beyond it all there is the certainty that we approach the advent of a new time. Within our lifetime is coming a period of illumination far

greater than anything the world has seen before; it is coming through women particularly, but men also. Women and men must go forward together, working harmoniously for the common weal. During the next few years I anticipate that it will be possible to watch the spreading of the dawn for which the world has waited throughout all time. It will become a reality within our own consciousness. Let us help forward the Race by turning away from seeking satisfaction in outward things, and realizing the God within. Then maybe the time is not so far distant when "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

N.B.—During the War, Mr. Tudor Pole is open to accept a few lecturing engagements at week-ends. Correspondence should be addressed to him at 1, Royal York Crescent, Bristol.

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